

CLAIMS

1. A method of cleaning shoes in a washing machine, said method comprising the steps of:
  - (a) providing a washing machine having a tub;
  - (b) providing at least one shoe having a sole;
  - (c) providing a device for orienting said at least one shoe in the tub of said washing machine, which maintains said at least one shoe in a particular orientation throughout the washing process;
  - (d) positioning said device in the tub of said washing machine with said at least one shoe therein; and
  - (e) operating said washing machine through a washing process.
2. The method of Claim 1 wherein said washing machine is a vertical axis washing machine, and said at least one shoe is placed in said device with said sole facing upward.
3. The method of Claim 2 wherein the washing machine operates through a spin cycle, and the washing machine has an agitator inside the tub, and the agitator rotates during the spin cycle of the washing machine, and said at least one shoe is oriented so that the toe of said at least one shoe is pointing in the same direction that the agitator rotates during the spin cycle of the washing machine.
4. The method of Claim 1 wherein the device for orienting said at least one shoe in the tub of the washing machine comprises a flexible bag having at least one pocket for maintaining said at least one shoe in a particular orientation.
5. The method of Claim 1 wherein the washing machine has an agitator, and the device for orienting said at least one shoe in the tub of the washing machine comprises a plurality of flexible mesh pockets that are at least indirectly joined together that fit around the washing machine agitator, and are held in place on the agitator.

6. A device for orienting a shoe in the tub of a vertical axis washing machine, said device comprising a holder for at least one shoe that maintains said at least one shoe in the washing machine with its sole facing upward.
7. A device according to Claim 6 comprising a flexible bag, wherein said holder comprises a pocket for a shoe.
8. A flexible bag for maintaining shoes in a desired orientation in a washing machine, said flexible bag comprising:  
at least one web of material that is arranged to have two opposed portions wherein said opposed portions are joined together to form several pockets, said pockets being defined by side walls, a closed bottom, and ends, and said pockets provide at least two openings for inserting shoes.
9. The flexible bag of Claim 8 comprising an even number of pockets for shoes.
10. The flexible bag of Claim 9 comprising four shoe pockets.
11. The flexible bag of Claim 8 further comprising at least one component joined thereto for retaining the pockets in a particular relationship.
12. The flexible bag of Claim 11 which is configured so that the pockets are disposed at least partially around the washing machine agitator when said flexible bag is placed in a washing machine.
13. The flexible bag of Claim 11 wherein said at least one component comprises a snap fastening system.
14. The flexible bag of Claim 8 further comprising a stiffer portion thereof which stiffer portion assists in holding the shoes in a particular position within the pockets.
15. A structure having at least two pockets for holding shoes in a washing machine, wherein at least two of said pockets are joined to each other directly or indirectly.
16. A method of cleaning shoes in a washing machine, said method comprising the steps of:
  - (a) providing a washing machine having a tub;

- (b) providing at least one shoe having a sole;
- (c) providing a device for orienting said at least one shoe in the tub of said washing machine, which maintains said at least one shoe in a particular orientation throughout the washing process;
- (d) positioning said device in the tub of said washing machine
- (e) placing said at least one shoe in said device; and
- (f) operating said washing machine through a washing process.